

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Anjali Mangla, and I am from Cheshire, Connecticut. I am a member of the HAVEN Free Clinic, and have interpreted in Spanish for our patients, overseen long-term care coordination for patients in our Reproductive Health Department, and am a patient advocate.

I stand in support of H.B. 6616: AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF HUSKY HEALTH BENEFITS TO THOSE INELIGIBLE DUE TO IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need. (to include only if there is an age cap: But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 26; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving and growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals have access to health coverage.

I believe that healthcare is a fundamental human right; however, this right is not universally guaranteed, regardless of where one is born and the circumstances in which they live. Globally, and within this state itself, we see the disparate impacts of a lack of access to adequate medical services. However, HUSKY is a program that provides free comprehensive care to those who are eligible for its services, and ensures that our most vulnerable populations have a right to medical services necessary for their survival. HUSKY traditionally misses one important vulnerable population -- undocumented children and young people, or our dreamers. I have seen the impact that safety net care like our clinic can have on these individuals, who otherwise cannot access care in our unnavigable and hybridized healthcare system. However, our clinic is just a safety net; it does not offer specialized care and cannot adequately fill in for all of the preventive services a primary care provider can provide. Lack of access to HUSKY, in addition to fear of repercussions from seeking medical care, contributes to many of our undocumented patients delaying seeking care. This actually leads to the rising healthcare costs accrued from preventable conditions becoming acutely serious and requiring expensive emergency room visits and medical interventions. If we expand the age of eligibility for HUSKY, regardless of immigration status, to the age of 26, we will finally be prioritizing *all* children and young adults in the state of Connecticut, and ensuring they have their fundamental right to healthcare.

Our patients are consistently burdened by high healthcare costs due to procedures that they must get in order to survive; however, without HUSKY coverage, they may face bills with thousands of dollars that they cannot afford. If they can not afford to look after their own health, how can they ensure the good health of their own children? A right to good health, regardless of where you were born or what circumstances you grew up in, should be our fundamental priority. Thus, our work does not end with expanding access up to age 26. In the long term, we need to ensure that all immigrants, including parents and adults, are able to have access to HUSKY and the healthcare they need. I am not alone in believing that affordable healthcare and access to resources to maintain good health is something all people have a right to..

I support H.B. 6616 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,  
Anjali Mangla